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IDL schedule inside!



Repair Basics

Avoiding the E.R.

A little probing before beginning your work could avoid the dreaded **Expensive Repair**.

By Richard Goulet

Whenever you're looking for a solution, you have to know as much as possible about the problem.

Consider the way health care works in this country. Before you even get to see a doctor, you're required to fill in a form which asks rather blunt questions – not just about how you feel right now, but about your medical history, your family's medical history, the medications you're taking, and whether you've been out of the country in the past 12 months. Add in all the personal information the medical office requires, and you might say they're going a little overboard.

But doctors have a very disciplined approach to problem-solving. If you want their diagnosis and their professional advice, you had better be ready to co-operate with some background information that will help them do their job.

A doctor needs to know a lot about a patient to administer the proper type of care.

And we in the automotive repair and service industry are doctors of a sort. We take the ailing and make it better. Unfortunately, we're not as disciplined as doctors are about collecting valuable information about our patients.

Recently I encountered a poor performance issue with my 1991 Mustang. It lacked power and performance at highway speeds. This condition appeared suddenly and unexpectedly. As the vehicle owner, I figured it could be very expensive – both in terms of down-time and money.

In tackling a problem like this, I knew a typical automotive service repair facility would want the following information: vehicle type (1991 Mustang LX), engine

type (2.3L 4-cylinder w/8 spark plugs), transmission type (5-speed, manual), and kilometers driven (252,000 – predominantly highway use).

In addition, they would probably describe the problem like this: "When the vehicle reaches 100 km-h, it lacks power, hesitates, and has difficulty getting to 115 km-h. As a result, vehicle cannot be driven using 5th gear (overdrive)."



They would take this information and then begin their investigation for a possible cause.

When compared to a doctor's approach, however, the repair centre may not have all the necessary information to effect the proper repair in a cost-efficient manner.

Additional probing by a service advisor or repair technician would have yielded the following valuable data:

- the vehicle has two principle drivers – an adult and a teenager; and
- the teenager recently ran out of gas and didn't tell anyone about it.

As a result of collecting additional information, the technician diagnosing this problem would have been able to zero in on the cause of the lack-of-power condition.

The Mustang is 14 years old with 252,000 clicks on the odometer. Rust is

evident on several of the external panels. There's a very good chance that while the vehicle was running on its last gasps of gas from the fuel tank, the pump picked up the rust that had been floating on top of the fuel inside the gas tank. The metal debris flowed through the lines and eventually clogged the fuel filter.

As it turned out, a replacement fuel filter restored the vehicle's performance to like-new – or as good as one could expect from a four-cylinder engine with 250,000 clicks on it!

It's important to note that a repair technician might have inadvertently resolved the problem by installing a new fuel filter as part of a package repair – never even knowing what the specific problem had been. However, if the vehicle had been serviced recently

(within the last 30 days, say) with a tune-up package that included the replacement of spark plugs and filters, the technician would have had to perform a variety of tests and services to locate the problem – and that would have led to a more expensive repair.

It's well known that the more expensive the repair, the more likely you'll have to deal with a dissatisfied customer. A customer in this situation is most likely to compare the cost of the repair to the value he puts on his vehicle because of its age and mileage.

A few more questions asked before the diagnosis process gets underway could avoid a lot of trouble for everyone. 🚗

Richard Goulet has worked in many facets of the repair and service industry for more than 30 years.